

Encourage

a ministry of Entrust



entrust⁴
Multiplying Leaders for Multiplying Churches

P.O. Box 25520
Colorado Springs, CO 80936-5520
719.622.1980
info@entrust4.org
www.facebook.com/Entrust4
www.entrust4.org

Four stages of prayer

A friend shared an eDevotional recently called *The Four Stages of Prayer* by Mark Thibodeaux. Much of the devotional fits in with my daily prayers, but at one point it presented a thought quite different from how I usually spend time with God. That challenged me to think about adding another dimension to my daily conversation with my heavenly father.

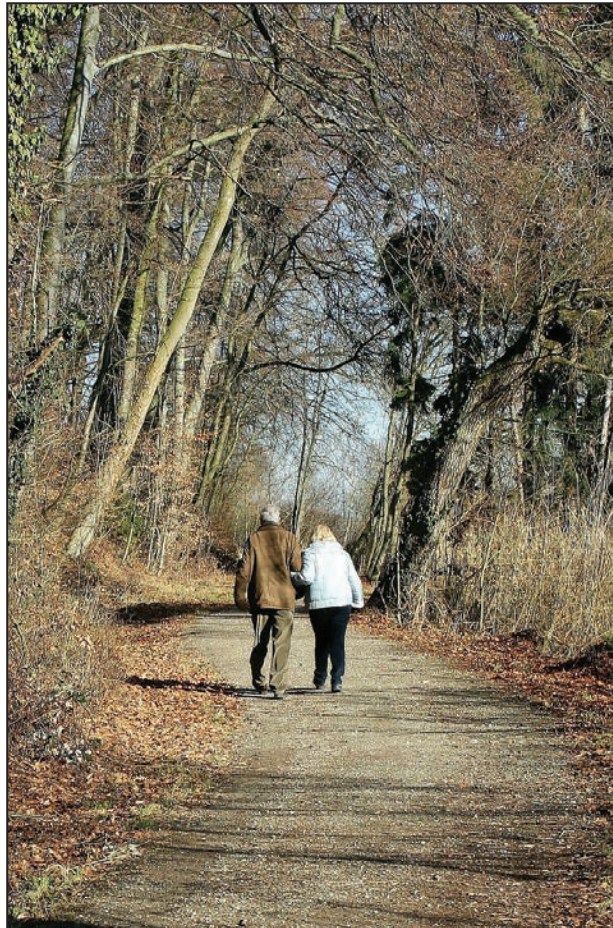
The first stage of prayer Thibodeaux describes is what he calls **talking at God**, talking about our needs and desires, telling God where we need his help and guidance.

The second stage is **talking to God**. Here the emphasis is still on our words, but we are more aware of our conversation with God. We talk with him as we do with a friend – sharing what is going on in our lives and the thoughts buzzing in our brains.

The third stage of prayer is **meditating on truth**. This is when we think about what we read in the Bible or seek to listen to what the Spirit is saying. In these practices we find our loving heavenly father communicates with us in a personal, intimate way. He is not just a distant or silent deity.

Thibodeaux says the fourth stage of prayer is **being with God**. These prayers move beyond communication to communion, such as we experience in our most intimate human relationships.

Sometimes when I walk with my wife down a worn path on our Tennessee mountain, no words are spoken, but I am very aware of her presence. This is different from when I hike by myself. When she and I walk together in silence and then begin to talk again, the time of silence seems to have deepened our relationship. Thibodeaux



says when we are with God in this way, we can sense his awesome goodness and stunning love, something words cannot express.

My prayers usually do not include this fourth kind of prayer. I certainly use the first stage, talking **at** God for help and guidance, and the second, talking **with** God about what is going on in my life. I do practice the third stage, **meditating on truth** – reading the Bible daily and then asking the Spirit to open and soften my heart to see, understand and obey what he wants me to do or be. But my relationship with God has very little of an intimate dimension to it, that fourth stage of prayer Thibodeaux describes.

Am I missing out on something? Sometimes when I read a Christian book, the author's description of his/her relationship with God seems different, maybe a bit mystical, from what I usually experience. I meditate on God's word. Others speak of meditating on God.

Perhaps meditating on God is closer to the fourth kind of prayer Thibodeaux writes about. Perhaps I need to look more closely at this. Perhaps there is more I can learn about prayer even after being a Christ follower for 58 years.

That's an encouraging thought to me. I trust it may be for you as well.

Roger Gulick
Pastoral Care, Entrust